BUSINESS NEWS

Subway Introduces its First Antibiotic-Free Sub

Subway is taking its first step on the long road toward making all of its meats antibiotic free.The fast food chain, which vowed to go antibiotic-free

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By Sarah Whitten, CNBC

Subway is taking its first step on the long road toward making all of its meats antibiotic free.

The fast food chain, which vowed to go antibiotic-free last October, will begin selling a rotisserie-style chicken sandwich on March 1 that is made with antibiotic-free, all white-meat chicken that has no artificial color and flavor.

Subway aims to be fully antibiotic-free in the United States by 2025. It plans to convert to chicken products that don't have antibiotics by the end of 2016, all antibiotic-free turkey products in the next two to three years, and all antibiotic-free pork and beef products between 2020 and 2025.

"We have always supported nutrition transparency, 100 percent of the time, and we've done our best to inform our customers of the nutrition values," said Lanette Kovachi, Subway's corporate dietitian. "For about 20 years now, we've put that information out there."

The company says customer demand prompted the ingredient overhaul.

Subway has been trying to burnish its image and move past the public disgrace of its longtime spokesman, Jared Fogle, who recently received a 15-year prison sentence for possessing child pornography and paying for sex with underage girls.

The restaurant brand, which has more than 27,000 restaurants in the United States, cut ties with Fogle soon after the charges came to light.

The chain is also rolling out a new carved-turkey sandwich to add to its lighter-fare "Fresh Fit" menu, which includes six-inch subs on whole grain bread that are low in saturated fat and come in at less than 400 calories.

Subway has long promoted its healthier-eating option, and lately regulators have been cracking down on restaurants that serve dishes with more salt or sugar than the daily recommended dose.

A judge in New York City recently ruled that some restaurants can be fined up to $600 for not posting salt warnings for some food items on their menus beginning March 1. The decision upheld a regulation from the New York City Board of Health.

"Whatever we need to do to inform the customer, we'll do it," Kovachi said, explaining that Subway already provides salt warnings on a few of its foot-long subs. "If New York City wants us to put a warning label on a menu item, we will do it."

Kovachi says Subway actually reduced sodium in many of its products in 2009 but opted against immediately publicizing the change to customers because some consumers believe low-sodium products to be bland.

Sarah Whitten, CNBC

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